(b) the steps Government have taken so far for their early disposal?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI): (b) Government has taken a series of steps to simplify procedures and speed up disposal of cases on the bases of the advice and recommendations of expert bodies like the Law Commission, etc. Conference of Law Ministers, Chief Ministers and Chief Justices and others concerned with the administration of justice are held periodically and the recommendations and conclusions emerging from such exchanges and consultations are implemented and their progress closely monitored. In addition, the Supreme, Court has also taken various steps to expedite the disposal of cases, which include more practical categorisation and classification of cases, stabilisation of Benches, prompt listing of cases and avoiding delisting of cases as far as possible, and ensuring non-accumulation possible, and ensuring non-accumulation of defective matters.

Rating Agenceis on ability of Plantation Companies

*91. SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a news-item in the 'Indian Express' of 26th April, 1998 wherein it is stated that a number of plantation companies have through various schemes collected large sums of money from public and now rating agencies have expressed doubts about the ability of plantation companies to provide return to depositors;

(b) if so, whether Governemnt have received complaints from depositors against above companies;

(c) if so, the reaction of Governmment in this regard;

(d) the names of defaulting companies in this regard– State-wise; and

(e) steps taken or proposed to be taken by Government to safeguard the interests of investors?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) to (e) Governemnt of India through a press release mandated SEBI to regulate Collective Investment Schemes including agro bonds, plantation bonds, etc. SEBI is in the process of finalising the regulations for Collective Investment Schemes. Based on the complaints received by SEBI from the investors the following companies have been identified as defaulters in meeting their obligations:

	Name of the entity	State
1.	Libra Plantations Ltd.	Maharashtra
2.	Arrow Global Agrotech Ltd.	Maharashtra
3.	Okara Agro Industries Ltd.	New Delhi
4.	SPG Greengold Plantations Ltd.	New Delhi

Category-Wise Cases Pending in the Courts at the end of 1995, 1996 & 1997

Sl. No.	Name of the High Courts	1995			1996			1997		
		Civil	Criminal	Total	Civil	Criminal	Total	Civil	Criminal	Total
1.	Allahabad	683071	135441	818512	724530	140925	865455	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
2.	Andhra Pradesh	142904	5744	148648	132191	3430	135621	127647	5564	133211
3.	Bombay	202430	14681	217111	217804	16254	234058	220014	16868	236882 (upto 3/97)

Sl. No.	Name of the High Courts	1995 Civil	1995 Criminal	1995 Total	1996 Civil	1996 Criminal	1996 Total	1997 Civil	1997 Criminal	1997 Total
4.	Calcutta	232737	21632	254369	241719	22593	264312	253028	29181	282209
5.	Delhi	139554	8658	148212	143256	10281	153537	153611	12244	165855 (upto 6/97)
6.	Gauhati	27456	3915	31371	28756	4262	33018	29706	4459	34165
7.	Gujarat*	92563	15841	108404	101266	21842	123108	97960	25006	122966
8.	Himachal Pradesh	17492	2944	20436	14161	3005	17166	10748	2604	13352
9.	J & K	89051	4649	93700	92282	4132	96414	95073	3572	98645
10.	Karnataka	156484	5009	161493	144735	6230	150965	130119	5270	135389
11.	Kerala	190849	6174	197023	210303	7520	217823	241057	9204	250261
12.	Madhya pradesh	56605	29537	86142	52652	29642	82294	50161	31853	82014 (upto 6/97)
13.	Madras	280155	22206	302361	289473	21167	310640	304286	22333	326619
14.	Orissa	47153	4789	51942	61170	5650	66820	78256	6641	84897
15.	Patna	73753	21692	95445	73439	19871	93310	72810	11856	84666
16.	Punjab & Haryana	120351	29684	150035	132506	29056	161562	142708	27963	170671
17.	Rajasthan	75819	19549	95368	76083	21685	97768	78668	19748	98416
18.	Sikkim	64	6	70	84	4	88	85	10	95
		2628491	352151	2980642	2736410	367549	3103959	2085937	234376	2320313

*Indicates break-up of Main & Miscellaneous cases.

Supreme Court	No. of cases pending Civil	Criminal	Total
As on			
1.5.96	24457	4586	29043
1.5.97	17737	3810	21547
1.5.98	16167	3394	19561

Rising prices of Commodities

*92. SHRI K. M. SAIFULLAH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether despite low rates of inflation recorded in recent weeks, the prices of most of commodities are still too high for the common man;

(b) if so, the reasons for this paradoxical situation; and

(c) the trends of Consumer Price Index (CPI) and inflation from month to month since April, 1997 and the comparative figures for the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) and (b) There was a seasonal spurt in the prices of a few commodities-mostly fruits and vegetables, even though inflation rate remained low for much of 1997-98. The wholesale prices of 30 essential commodities increased by 8.4 per cent during the first seven weeks of 1998-99. Much of this rise was on account of a very sharp increase in the prices of potatoes (315%), onions (17.6%) and Tea (28.4%). Decline in the production of potatoes, fruits (mango etc.) and vegetables due to prolonged cold and wet spell in Nov.-Dec. 1997 was the main reason for shortfall in market arrivals and consequent price increase.

The trend of rise in the prices of essential commodities is listed below:

Annual Inflation Rate in Essential Commodities (as on 16.05.1998)

	Commodities	weight(%)	Price rise(%)
High Price rise (more than 10%)	Potatoes	0.47	315.0
	Tea	0.56	28.4
	Onions	0.16	17.6